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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 007136

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SUBJECT: (C) ZIMBABWE: FCO CONVENES U.S., CANADA,  
AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

REF: EMAIL STEVE HILL - RICK BELL 10/03/06

Classified By: PolCouns Rick Mills; reason 1.4 (b, d)

11. (U) Action Request; please see paragraph 11.

12. (C) SUMMARY: FCO Zimbabwe Section convened a meeting with London-based political officers from U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand October 4. The UK's priority on Zimbabwe is to ensure renewal of EU sanctions in February; it expects renewal but not without difficulty. FCO believes an EU-tabled UNGA resolution would be desirable but more difficult to achieve, especially as prospects of passage in the General Assembly are not encouraging. Anticipating that the UNSC may be less helpful on Zimbabwe next year, the UK may try to push for a country-specific discussion of Zimbabwe this year in the UNSC. The UK may end up having to allow a senior Zimbabwean official (but not President Mugabe) to attend an EU-Africa summit in 2007, which Portugal is keen to arrange during its EU presidency. FCO seeks closer coordination regarding policy and contingency planning. Poloff shared ref talking points, which were timely and much appreciated. Questions emerged from the discussion, for which FCO would like more detailed information from USG (paragraphs 10-11). END SUMMARY.

13. (C) FCO Zimbabwe Section Head St. John Gould and his team convened a meeting October 4 with political officers from the U.S. Embassy and the High Commissions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Gould led the discussion, which covered the EU, the UN, "bringing forward change," contingency planning and coordination.

14. (C) EU: Gould said:

- The EU has slipped back to a division between northern countries supporting the UK's hard line and southern countries (notably France, Portugal and Italy) less willing to challenge the Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ).

- The UK's priority is to ensure renewal of EU sanctions in February 2007. Gould "would be surprised" if sanctions were not renewed. However, as renewal requires unanimity among the 25 member states, Gould anticipated that France and Portugal would both cause difficulties: France wants to host a Franco-African Summit in February and will likely press for an exception to the travel ban so that President Mugabe can attend. Portugal is keen to arrange an EU-Africa Summit

during its EU presidency (second half of 2007; Germany, which will have the presidency the first half of the year, is "solidly" with the UK). Gould allowed that the UK might end up having to accept a compromise whereby a senior GOZ official subject to the travel ban (such as the Foreign Minister) would be allowed to represent Mugabe.

- The UK would like the October 16 GAERC to result in "conclusions" by the EU Foreign Ministers, but France is objecting.

15. (C) EU - UNGA: London would like the EU to table an UNGA resolution specifically on Zimbabwe, referencing the Tibaijuka report and the resolution of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. However, France, Portugal, Italy and Austria are skeptical, partly because the last such draft in 2004 was blocked by a "no-action" motion. The EU's October 10 meeting will be "the last chance" to get agreement on such a resolution this year. Gould opined that it would be easier for the EU to support a draft tabled by someone else.

16. (C) UN: UNSYG Annan has "drawn a blank" on Zimbabwe and his term is nearly up, so Gould expects nothing from the UN Secretariat in the near term. The UNSC's composition in 2007

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suggests that it will become harder to get action against the GOZ, so the UK is considering trying for a country-specific discussion of Zimbabwe this year in the UNSC. Gould admitted it was unlikely that any action (PRST or Resolution) would come out of it. Gould was heartened that Tanzania spoke out on Zimbabwe in the Security Council, and pleased that President Bush had met with President Kikwete, which should bolster the latter's resolve.

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17. (C) "BRINGING FORWARD CHANGE": Gould said that FCO Minister for Africa Lord Triesman is keen to find ways to hasten change in Zimbabwe rather than standing helplessly by until Mugabe departs the scene. This is easier said than done, however, Gould acknowledged:

- The opposition and civil society are divided, and the GOZ has shown it is willing and able to crush dissent. Nonetheless, Harare missions should keep coordinating support for the most strategic groups.

- South Africa is potentially key, but has been disappointingly unwilling to challenge Mugabe. It does seem to be more willing lately to talk about long-term change in Zimbabwe, but not to take action while Mugabe is in power.

- Within the ZANU-PF regime, dissatisfaction is increasing, but Mugabe is a master at fending off challenges. The UK is contemplating having its ambassador tell Mugabe there is no chance of a policy change while he remains in office, but has not/not reached a decision on this.

18. (C) CONTINGENCY PLANNING AND COORDINATION: Gould emphasized the importance of close coordination on policy and contingency planning, in capitals as well as in the field. (He was not/not implying that such coordination is lacking in the field, his point was that capitals should be more tightly lashed up as well.) The UK has up to 20,000 nationals in Zimbabwe, he noted, and experience elsewhere has shown that if one western country takes drastic action in a deteriorating situation, that tends to create a chain reaction. Contingency planning for a worst-case scenario should be very discreet so as not to contribute to instability. One specific item to watch, according to Gould, is Air Zimbabwe's safety: the company is "cutting corners" on spare parts.

19. (C) Among ourselves, we should have a clear understanding

of what reforms would enable us to re-engage fully with the GOZ, and what levers are available to us, Gould said. The UK will meet at officials level on October 6, then put a proposal to ministers. It will then want to consult with the USG. Gould said the FCO is thinking of inviting U.S., Canadian, Australian and New Zealand officials who cover Southern Africa in their respective capitals to come to London for further consultations.

¶10. (C) FCO QUERIES: Poloff shared ref points, which were much appreciated. Based on the discussion, FCO would like more information from the USG on the following:

- USG thoughts on an UNGA resolution;
- Details of USG engagement with SADC (especially military);
- USG engagement with China regarding Zimbabwe;
- USG assessment of coordination regarding contingency planning.

¶11. (U) Action Requested: We would be grateful for responses to the queries in paragraph 10 that we can pass to FCO.

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